

LEST WE FORGET

BY H. SELBY MSIMANG

South Africa would appear just now to have reached the stage where the whole administration of the affairs of the country is in a state of utter confusion engineered since the end of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 when the conquerors became the vanquished and Great Britain abdicated her role she had assumed of being a protector of aborigines and deliberately relegated the Black races of South Africa to the Colonists to do with them as they pleased. This despicable act on the part of Great Britain was clearly demonstrated when the British Parliament subsequently approved of the South Africa Act of Union which contained not the least effective safeguard for her wards and our common interests.

We recall the duplicity which Great Britain practised on the Zulus at the conclusion of the so-called Zulu War of 1879 when Sir Garnet Wolseley declared publicly in the name of Queen Victoria that "Zululand would remain the territory of the Zulus as long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West". The sun still rises in the East and still sets in the West, yet Zululand, notwithstanding the KwaZulu concept of today, is not yet Zulu Territory but has become, since the annexation of Zululand to Natal, the territory of the South African Trust, not, for the Zulus, but for the Republic of South Africa.

Further we recall that since the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War there have been unleashed laws designed deliberately to reduce the whole African black races to virtual slavery. With the Pass laws and numerous other inhibitions, Bantudom became confused, seized with terrific fear and embarrassment. The Colonists wasted no time but proceeded to work for the amalgamation of the four Colonies into one great power in order to better hasten the total enslavement of the blackman. Here again Great Britain confirmed her shameless abdication of her self-assumed role of protection of the aborigines, by ratification of the Constitution of the Union of South Africa without a single amendment or introduction of a really protective clause covering the black people of this country. . . .

Within a period of less than four years the South African Parliament enacted and passed the Natives Land Act of 1913, in terms of which all the land covering the extent of the Union of South Africa now the Republic of South Africa became the property of the Union Government, except patches here and there designated "Scheduled Native Areas." Parliament was aware that the scheduled Native areas were not adequate enough for the settlement of the black population of that time, and appointed a commission to find land to add to the scheduled areas. Unfortunately the report of that Commission was rejected entirely by the white people of South Africa.

No sooner was the Natives Land Act of 1913 promulgated as the law of the country, than thousands of African families engaged as farm labourers received notices to quit. The time

specified in the notices was so short that one soon met almost everywhere families moving about with their children and driving their stock, not knowing where to go. Some foolishly made arrangements with their employers to leave their stock for a few days while they were endeavouring to find new settlements. Most farmers charged grazing fees of about 10c per large beast and 5c per goat or sheep a day. Most of the stock eventually became the property of the farmer as the owner could not raise the grazing fee charged. The majority of these families drifted towards industrial areas for the purpose of finding work and settlement for their children. Mention should be made that the majority of the families evicted from the farms were people who had been left in charge of the farms whose owners had had to go to industrial areas to raise capital for their development — farmers who had lost all as the result of the Boer War. Those Africans who had made good as the result of the half-share system agreement for the use of the land while the owners were away in industrial areas, invested their money in buying land or joining land syndicates of those who had obtained options to buy before the Act was promulgated. It is, such land which subsequently was declared "black spots". Many of the people now settled at Ezakheni in the Ladysmith District have been removed from lands acquired by syndicates made possible by one of their ancestors having had a written option to buy a farm.

The influx into industrial areas caused by the evictions of farm labourers had led by 1922, to the creation of unauthorised locations in urban areas, that the Government of the day had no option but to make a law for the demolition of these shacks around the towns. It appointed a Commission whose chairman was Col. Stallard who openly declared that he would get rid of every black man out of the towns. And later Verwoerd, when he was Prime Minister, spoke of the destruction of "locations in the sky" — meaning African workers employed as domestic servants, housed in the flats of Johannesburg. It is difficult to gauge the intelligence and mentality of highly educated persons pursuing such a policy as apartheid, naked of reality, fraught with all the elements of self-destruction, with which South Africa is confronted today.

In 1936 the government of the day passed two complementary laws, one taking away the African common-roll vote, the other proposing, as a "final solution" to the African land question, the allocation of 13% of South Africa's total area to its entire African population.

In pursuance of the Acts of 1936, the Government has blindly followed a policy of hate and has refused to recognise its impracticabilities. For some time now, it has been the Government's serious intention to define the boundaries of areas allotted to blacks and other racial groups of the country. It has been close to 3 decades in pursuit of this dream. Yet the Government persists in removing black

communities from their homes. According to a speech by Mr Val Volker, M.P. for Ladysmith, the Government has not yet decided on consolidation but a number of committees of investigation have been appointed. He himself is chairman of one of them and a member of another. There are sub-committees whose reports are expected in the month of May this year. There is of course a central committee whose decision would constitute the final report upon which Parliament may make a decision. What has surprised many black people is that in the meantime, action is being taken to remove a number of communities from their settled homes, all without reason or cause. Some of these communities live on land they have occupied for more than a century, like Matiwanoskop and Jononoskop. Nobody at the moment is sure of the permanency of the land to which these communities are being removed. There might be a repetition of what was the fate of the community removed from Besters in the Klipriver Division to Hobsland in the same Division which was soon claimed to have been land required by the

Ladysmith town for the building of a dam. It had in consequence to be removed again and as a result these people lost their freehold rights to the land. They are now where there is still no security of tenure and subject to the authority of two governments South African and KwaZulu which has created in their minds serious confusion, for the other Government does not own the land and therefore its powers are limited. If the KwaZulu Government had some reasonable authority over the communities threatened with removal, I have no doubt, it would request the Republican Government to suspend these removals until it had completed its plans for consolidation and KwaZulu Government would then know the geography of her territory, and itself would decide the destination of communities to be removed and make adequate arrangements for their settlement. It would be KwaZulu's primary concern as to how to meet their economic prospects, and not crowd them together as at Ezakheni where there is no space even for a small fowl run or a small piece of ground for growing ordinary vegetables. □

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Reviewed by Marie Dyer.

E.L.T.I.C. — English Language Teaching Information Centre — is an institution established by the S.A. English Academy for the benefit of teachers of English as a second language. Its greatest value is probably in the support and encouragement it seeks to provide for English teachers in the (generally) unstimulating environments of understaffed and underequipped Black schools. Its journal, the *Eltic Reporter*, has gradually been increasing its quality and scope; this latest issue is enterprising, lively, informative, and interesting. Many different kinds of readers would find it interesting and valuable.

It contains three sections: a forum for students' writing and teachers' records of activities — in this issue an imaginative contribution from a school in Bophuthatswana; a section containing practical and inventive suggestions and ideas from experts and experienced teachers for classroom work — ranging here from a chart illustrating the use of "a" and "an", to an account of a trial of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth for murder, held in a classroom court. The third section 'overview' includes general literary and critical articles, conference papers, and reviews of selected books — in this issue (among others) C.O. Gardner's Reality review of *Lindiwe* by Shimane Solly Mekgoe. □